

Other Developments

NPS PHOTO



Dan Boughter, Jim Bromberg, and Andy Wisdom of the California EPMT cut eucalyptus trees at Cabrillo National Monument, San Diego, and apply salt (instead of herbicide) to the stumps before covering them in black plastic.

Exotic plants diminish under EPMTs

by Linda Drees

In 2002 five new Exotic Plant Management Teams (EPMTs) controlled damaging invasive plants that threaten native species conserved in the national parks. In total, nine teams served more than 95 parks, treated more than 100 species of harmful invasive plants on 85,000 infested acres, monitored more than 41,000 acres, and restored 8 acres. Six species of invasive plants have been eradicated from parks since the establishment of EPMTs.

EPMTs were first formed in 2000 with funding from the Natural Resource Challenge. As mobile strike forces consisting of plant management specialists, EPMTs assist parks with urgent invasive plant control measures. The teams have increased their technical capacity through the recent development of a Web-based data system and a corresponding Geographic Information Systems map to track progress at each project site and to illustrate the link between moni-

toring and management. An annually updated EPMT operations handbook provides EPMTs and other partners with a framework for developing rapid response teams. The NPS EPMTs are proving so successful that the National Wildlife Refuge Association is requesting funding for 50 of its own teams for the Wildlife Refuge System.

Seven more teams were requested in FY 2003 to serve national parks in the following areas: Colorado Plateau, Northern Rockies, Great Lakes, Mid-Atlantic, Northeast, Appalachian Highlands and Cumberland Piedmont, and Alaska. As Natural Resource Challenge support of EPMTs has grown, exotic plants have diminished and park natural resources are being protected. ■

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Learning centers meeting most objectives

With 17 learning centers proposed for future establishment, the Secretary of the Interior asked the National Park Service in 2002 to evaluate operational centers before additional funding would be considered to expand the network. The analysis focused on the initial five learning centers and found them to have great potential for increasing partnerships, cooperation, and collaboration and for giving parks the information they need but may never have the staff or internal funding to obtain.

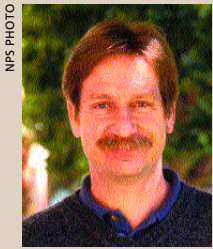
Several accomplishments highlight the early success of the learning centers. The centers are largely meeting their research-related objectives. Most have expanded facilities for researchers, including housing, and have increased the amount and quality of the research being con-

ducted. They are becoming excellent venues to engage “citizen scientists” in research and have programs for informing the public about what is being learned about park resources. The Internet, intranet, science conferences, and school science curriculums are all proving to be valuable avenues for information dissemination. Many strong and diverse partnerships have been formed and are furthering the goals of the learning centers. One area needing improvement is the coordination of research and informational functions between a park that hosts a learning center and the other parks in its network. Other than the Ocean Alaska Science and Learning Center, which benefits all its member parks, the initial learning centers tend to focus on the host park and are just beginning to coordinate

these functions with other parks. All in all, the initial learning centers are succeeding in facilitating research in national park networks in collaboration with partners, and are serving as a catalyst to share knowledge widely.

The report was transmitted to Secretary Norton in August and recommended that the waiting list of 17 learning centers be approved for FY 2003 funding. ■

A champion for the Natural Resource Challenge



Don Neubacher

Although he serves as superintendent of Point Reyes National Seashore in California, Don Neubacher is a champion for the preservation of natural resources throughout the National Park System. “I enjoy working on something that’s a legacy for the nation; it’s a public service that has long-lasting value and I’m pretty inspired by that.” The leadership Don has demonstrated in pursuing the Natural Resource Challenge helped to earn him the 2002 Director’s Award for Superintendent of the Year for Natural Resource Stewardship.

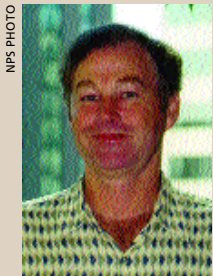
Don is a talented superintendent and has successfully managed several contro-

versial issues during his career. He professionalized the staff of the national seashore, established lines of communication with the park’s local and extended communities, and created closer ties among federal, state, and other agencies and nongovernmental organizations. His most notable achievement, however, has been five years in the making: Don helped envision and implement a major, national natural resource initiative, the Natural Resource Challenge. This program, which began in 2000, is designed to increase funding for the National Park System by \$100 million annually and identifies numerous actions needed to improve the capabilities of the National Park Service to sustain park natural resources. Funding increases have already gone toward initiating nationwide natural resource inventories,

establishing long-term monitoring programs, enhancing air and water quality, and creating Exotic Plant Management Teams, learning centers, and Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Units.

Don’s role in pursuing this initiative has been crucial. He testified before Congress, met with the National Leadership Council and regional councils, and has educated NPS employees through presentations and literature that he and his staff developed. His energy and dedication to the Natural Resource Challenge are endless, and his leadership at Point Reyes and for this important national program is evident in the support he receives to help manage major projects. ■

Changing the way the National Park Service does business



Steve Fancy

Dr. Steven Fancy was honored in 2002 with the Professional Excellence in Natural Resources Award. He helped engineer the network concept for vital signs monitoring and was also the author of the NPS Monitoring Vision in 1999. Through his leadership and dedication, the concept of monitoring networks is becoming a reality. For Steve, it was about stepping up to the plate. “I saw a window of opportunity and I became a workaholic and did what was needed to get the program going. It took organizing, getting others involved, and establishing a vision; in the end, it got people to work together to move forward.”

People did move forward and, in doing so, created a monitoring network that has essentially changed the way the National Park Service does business. It allows for data to be gathered by the parks, regions, and divisions, and makes information available to park resource managers and decision makers. The successful concept is about sharing rather than concentrating on individual projects. Steve realizes how his hard work is paying off. “The Inventory and Monitoring Program has become a unifying program. It brings people and parks together; while parks used to compete [with one another for funding and staff], now they are on the same side. It’s an interdisciplinary approach to help parks work on things they have in common.”

Steve has stepped into a leadership role and performed his duties with great skill. He works hard to get people to follow, and in turn, people work hard for him. ■